

Message Text

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14

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0741

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

CJCS WASHDC

CINCPAC CP SMITH HI

COMUSSAG NKP THAI

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 3086

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MCAP, PINS, CB

SUBJ: POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CHANGES IN MILITARY COMMANDS

REF: A. PHNOM PENH 2918

B. STATE 60212

1. THERE IS, OF COURSE, ALWAYS A POLITICAL ELEMENT IN ASSIGNMENTS OF SENIOR FANK MILITARY OFFICERS AND ONE OF THE LON BOTHERS, THE PRESIDENT, USUALLY HAS THE FINAL WORD. WE DO NOT, HOWEVER, BELIEVE THAT THE RECENT JUGGLING OF COMMANDS AFFECTED THE BASIC ALIGNMENT OF POLITICAL FORCES WITHIN FANK OR THAT THIS WAS ITS PRINCIPAL PURPOSE.

2. THE REMOVAL OF THE PARA BDE AND KAMPOT COMMANDERS WAS OBVIOUSLY BASED ON OTHER CONSIDERATIONS AND REASON DICTATED THE DIVISION OF MR-1 AND REASSIGNMENT OF ITS COMMANDER. AS WE INDICATED IN REF A, LON NOL TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE RESULTING SHUFFLE TO MADE SOME INROADS ON MAJOR GENERAL SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ' S HOME CONSTITUENCY.

3. CHHIM CHHUON IS, AS REF B POINTED OUT, ONE OF THE FEW FANK FRIENDS OF BG LON NON, WHO PROBABLY NOMINATED HIM
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FOR HIS NEW JOB. THE PHNOM PENH SUBDISTRICT COMMAND HAS, HOWEVER, NOT BEEN AN IMPORTANT ONE. IT WAS CREATED TO FIND A PLEASANT JOB FOR NGUON LY KHEANG, A FRIEND OF LON NOL WHO HAD COME UPON BAD DAYS IN KANDAL MSD, WHERE HE HAD BEEN LIGHTLY WOUNDED. HE HAD NO TROOPS ASSIGNED TO HIM AND THE POSITION WAS COMPLETELY CEREMONIAL. HE HAS BEEN HOSPITALIZED FOR " MENTAL IRREGULARITIES AND OBSERVATIONS". THE NEW FANK REORGANIZATION AWARDED TO PPMSD THE STATUS OF A REAL COMMAND POSITION WITH A HQ/ STAFF OF 264 AUTHORIZED, THE 471 BN WITH 512 AUTHORIZED, 30 TERR COS WITH 3690 AUTHORIZED AND THREE ARTILLERY PLATOONS WITH 87 AUTHORIZED. IN FACT THE HQ HAS LESS THAN 100 SOLDIERS, THE 471 BN HAS LESS THAN 350 PERSONNEL, THE COMPANIES ARE UNORGANIZED AND UNEQUIPPED WITH AN UNKNOWN STRENGTH, AND THE ARTILLERY PLATOONS ARE A PART OF THE ARTILLERY BRIGADE. THESE FORCES ARE COMPLETELY DWARFED BY THE PPSMR AND THE NATIONAL GENDARMERIE, AS WELL AS BY THE PHNOM PENH GARRISON, WHICH IS A SEPARATE UNIT UNDER BG SOK CHIEP. CHHIM CHHUON HAS THUS NOT ASSUMED A POLITICALLY IMPORTANT POSITION.

4. WE ARE ALERT TO THE IMPORTANCE CHANGES IN MILITARY COMMANDS ASSUME IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION AND WILL PROMPTLY INFORM THE DEPARTMENT OF THOSE WE BELIEVE TO BE SIGNIFICANT.

SWANK

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